

Stages and Mississippi Alternate Assessment

OVERVIEW

Stages includes two major software components: (a) informal assessment software and (b) curriculum software. Stages informal assessment software is instructional in nature, providing activities with constructive feedback and opportunities for the learner to explore and choose. Stages curriculum software is a collection of interactive daily instructional programs appropriate for learners at each Stage.

Stages software enhances the Mississippi Alternate Assessment process because:

- 1. Stages activities align with the regular curriculum in mathematics, reading and language/writing.**
- 2. Stages generates evidence of learner progress.**
- 3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.**
- 4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.**

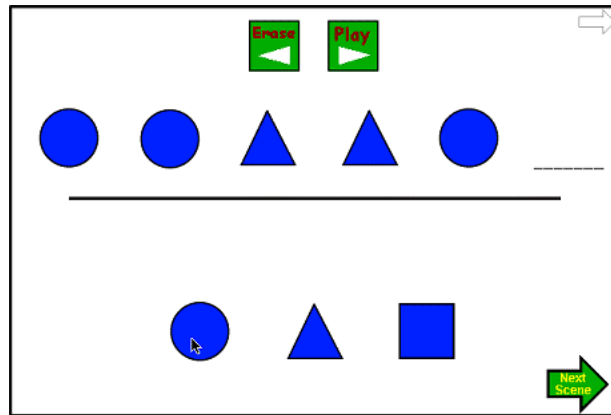
1. Stages activities align with the regular curriculum in mathematics, reading and language/writing. Stages can be a tool for learners with special needs to demonstrate progress even if they cannot take the regular assessment with accommodations or modifications. The content covered in Stages activities also includes mathematics and reading topics at a range of levels. The learner's IEP team can also use Stages to help determine whether or not alternate assessment is appropriate by providing informal benchmarks of learner progress in mathematics, reading and language/writing. Please refer to the section, "How Stages Correlates with Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks" for detailed matching.

2. Stages generates evidence of learner progress.

During Stages software activities, the instructor can print directly from any screen to capture a learner-generated product as a benchmark. At the end of each activity, a report with instructional data about the time spent, choices made, response accuracy or work product, input method, prompt type, and time/date stamp are displayed with the learner's name. The instructor may wish to then print that screen, save the screenshot, or save the information as a text-format electronic file as examples of student work for portfolio evidence collection.

Observation guidelines and forms in the Stages kits help the instructional team make the most out of an activity session. The data-gathering features of the software enable the observer to focus on noting the learner's behavior and thinking-out-loud responses. Two adults from the instructional team can work together: one adult can encourage the learner and the other can note valuable data about behaviors without being noticed by the learner. Alternatively if a video or still camera is available, it may be directed at the learner and the computer monitor to discreetly record interactions and other behaviors while one adult coaches. During the sessions, the learner will be less conscious of her performance being recorded, making her responses more candid.

Collected information can be used to fill in the learner's **EOP** and **DPO** forms (assessment method codes: SWS/7, WP/2, CBA/4, and PO/1). Over time, the collected data will provide evidence that the instructional team needs to build a complete picture of the learner's skill achievement.



Example screen shot from Stage Four: Create Patterns

3. Stages provides learners with the opportunity for increased independence.

The feedback in Stages activities is encouraging and rewarding, providing a relaxed setting for exploring topics and demonstrating skills with minimal supervision. Many Stages activities include accessible choice-making opportunities. Functional skills activities include real-life community settings.

4. Stages assists the learner's IEP team with selecting assistive technology and assessment tools.

An objective of Stages software is to provide several options for input methods and other settings so that the learner's instructor, parents, and others in the IEP team can determine his ideal learning and communication environment. Different devices, auditory feedback, speeds and prompts are among the variables.

SUMMARY

Stages augments the Mississippi alternate assessment cycle. The Stages software is a comprehensive benchmark tool to assist the instructional team in collecting valuable information on learner skill achievement, determine assessment strategy, and discover the learner's abilities and thinking approach.

How Stages Correlates with the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks¹

Mathematics Based on Suggested Teaching Strategies for Third Grade Competencies and Objectives

Unit Theme: Patterns

- 1.a, b Using colors, symbols, beads, or other available objects, repeat patterns on graph paper or a necklace. Analyze and describe the patterns.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Math Readiness: Explore Patterns, Continue/Fill-In Patterns, Create Patterns

- Stage Four gives the learner an opportunity to first observe simple repeating sequences of geometric shapes, sound, and color in *Explore Patterns*. The learner is asked to complete sequences of shapes by choosing the correct shape in *Continue/Fill-In Patterns*. Finally, *Create Patterns* gives the learner a chance to compose sequences based on shape, color and sound.

Unit Theme: Geometry

- 2.a, d, e Locate, name, and describe geometric shapes in the classroom, cafeteria, and playground.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Four: Shape ID

- In this Stage Four activity the learner has an accessible way to demonstrate the ability to find shapes in isolation and in a scene (photographs and drawings).

Unit Theme: Measurement

- 3.f Use clock faces to indicate times to the minute.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Six: Explore and Assess: Telling Time

- The learner has an opportunity in *Telling Time* to demonstrate the ability to tell time from digital and analog clock displays.

Unit Theme: Data/Probability

- 4.a, b, c Collect data based on students' interests. Construct graphs, display findings, and interpret data using student generated questions.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Charts and Graphs

- The *Charts and Graphs* activity includes pie charts, bar graphs and line graphs. Familiar subjects such as favorite ice cream or most popular zoo animal help engage the learner.

¹ Information from the Grade 3 Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks for Mathematics and Language Arts. Mississippi Department of Education. Source: <http://marcopolo.mde.k12.ms.us/frameworks.html> (Accessed August 27, 2002).

Unit Theme: Number Sense

6. j, k, m; 7. h Compare the relationship between the fraction part and the whole.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Fractions

- In *Fractions* the learner has an accessible way to show mastery of the concept of simple fractions by selecting parts of a whole object and identifying the fraction that represents the number of individuals in a group.

Unit Theme: Basic Operations

7. j-n Use play money or overhead money to demonstrate money concepts. Use \$1, \$10, and \$100 paper bills to represent ones, tens, and hundreds, Use dimes, and pennies to represent tenths and hundredths of a dollar.

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Math Facts (+, -, x, ÷), Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

Stage Six: Explore: Money Orientation

Assess: Money ID, Counting Money, Money Equivalents

- *Math Facts* and *Word Problems* in Stage Five give the learner an opportunity to demonstrate ability to do the four basic operations.
- In Stage Six *Money* activities the learner is presented with coins up to \$.25 and bills up to \$20. The learner is given the opportunity to explore money amounts and names. Questions about money amounts include realistic scenarios taken from Stage Six *Stories*.

Unit Theme: Word Problems

9. a-e [Use the following activities to] solve word problems: [please refer to framework document].

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Math: Explore Word Problems (+, -, x, ÷)

- The learner can explore the concept of word problems with the help of simple animations. In order to solve the problems the learner must identify the necessary information. Some questions include illustrations that help the learner solve the problem.

Reading and Language/Writing

1. **Interact with others for various purposes in classroom and school communities based on first-hand experiences using reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. (R, W, S, L, V)²**
2. **Use an appropriate writing process ... to express and communicate personal ideas and feelings. (R, W, S, L, V)**

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Seven: Making Stories

- Using the accessible on-screen keyboard in Stage Seven *Making Stories*, the learner can produce written expression about a special interest or talent. A picture, displayed in the activity as a writing prompt, may be selected by the learner from a menu or it may be the learner's own favorite picture imported into the activity.

3. **Gather and organize information using a variety of resources and present it through writing, speaking, and various art forms. (R, W, S, L, V)**

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Reading: Letters (Alphabetization 1 and 2)

- The learner can demonstrate the ability to alphabetize words as an organization and research skill.

4. **Develop individual skills for working independently and participate cooperatively while engaging in small and large group activities. (R, W, S, L, V)**

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Problem Solving: Number Guess, Letter Scramble, Making Words, Tic-Tac-Toe, Mystery Shape, Mystery Person

- Stage Five gives the learner opportunities to solve puzzles and play strategy games. The learner applies deductive reasoning in *Number Guess*, *Mystery Shape*, and *Mystery Person*. *Making Words* and *Letter Scramble* involve creative thinking. *Tic-Tac-Toe* allows the learner to play with the computer or with a peer.

7. **Experience a variety of literary forms and styles in order to discover the meaning and beauty of language. (R, W, S, L, V)**

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Reading: Sounds (Rhymes)

- Stage Five presents the learner with rhyming sentence pairs accompanied by simple animations. The learner is then asked to select the rhyming word pairs from a word wall.

8. **Develop an ability to read and with increasing fluency and understanding by writing and by using a variety of reading strategies. (R, W, S, L, V)**

Related Stages Assessment Activities:

Stage Five: Reading: Meaning

Stage Six: Stories: Cody, Mitchell, Meg, Adam, Ryan

- Stage Five *Meaning* gives the learner an opportunity to demonstrate the ability to identify illustrations that show the meaning of a given word. Dolch word lists are used, at five levels: Pre-Primer, Primer, First Grade, Second Grade, and Third Grade.
- Stage Six *Stories* are short passages that the learner can listen to and/or read silently at any pace. The stories are about real people in scenarios related to activities of daily living. The learner chooses the story to read using an appropriate access device.

² **Strands:** (R - Reading) (W-Writing) (S - Speaking) (L - Listening) (V-viewing)